

Needham Council on Aging Board Meeting

February 13, 2020

Center at the Heights, 500 Hillside Ave., Needham, MA 02494

Present: Colleen Schaller, Penny Grossman, Dan Goldberg, Sue Mullaney, Sandra Prinn, Helen Gregory, Gary Crossen, and Ed Cosgrove

COA: Ms. Jessica Moss, Social Worker.

Director of Health and Human Services: Mr. Timothy Muir McDonald

5:00 Meeting Called to Order by Ms. Penny Grossman facilitator on behalf of Board Chair Ms. Colleen Schaller, who was present but could not speak

Ms. Grossman asked for a review of the November 2019 minutes. Ms. Mullaney noted she was not in attendance so her name was removed from the attendance list. Mr. Goldberg made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Ms. Grossman seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. The November 2019 minutes were approved.

Mr. Goldberg made a motion to approve the January 2020 minutes. Dr. Cosgrove seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. The January 2020 minutes were approved.

Note: There was no December 2019 meeting.

Ms. Latanya Steele Director was absent due to illness.

Ms. Jessica Moss presented the social work update.

Ms. Moss mentioned the new Comfort Crew program based around the idea of a memory café for those with dementia and their loved ones. There are 3 pairs attending regularly as the program grows.

The League of Women Voters are partnering with CATH in assisting with the Census 2020 compilation. The Census is online for the first time. There are two on line dates set for the CATH; and two at the Needham Housing Authority.

Ms. Moss noted she has started a program at Boston College consisting of 6 sessions with the title *Management and Human Services*. She noted that she will bring the best practices back to her work at CATH.

Ms. Moss noted the social work staff has started “Cath on the Go” programming at the Needham Housing Authority to address residents’ concerns. This week’s topic was scam prevention presented with Police Department. The next one will be on veteran’s issues.

Ms. Moss as volunteer coordinator has expanded the gift shop by two hours per day and is stocking snacks with the goal of increasing revenue over time. She noted there are four new volunteers as of January.

Ms. Moss noted that Mr. Stephan Grably, Transportation Coordinator, was not able to attend but his report is in the Board packet along with Ms. Aicha Kelley’s programming report.

Ms. Moss also noted that the SHINE position is posted as of the week of February 10.

- Mr. McDonald noted that the Shine program's multi-year grant is up for renewal and an application will occur through the Executive Office of Elder Affairs when the application becomes available-Needham is interested in hosting again. Mr. McDonald also noted that he plans to speak to Representative Denise Garlick and requested Board members to contact her office as well about the grant since there is no funding increase. Needham absorbs about \$3000.00 to \$4000.00 in costs per year but as the regional center for SHINE this makes Needham first among the equals. Needham has more and better trained volunteers. The Federal funding surprisingly has a small increase so this means that it will better fund the open SHINE position and the town will cover benefits because the position is grant funded.
- Mr. McDonald also wanted to make the Board aware of mandated accounting and finance changes across Town government that will impact all divisions and departments based on audits and reviews. In order to avoid any future accusations of revenue mishandling the new policy will cover all staff and volunteers with rigorous internal controls. A copy of the final policy will be available soon. A challenge for the CATH is that Friends and the Council on Aging donations are accepted by the same people in the same location. The new donation policy will outline that donations must be made to a specific cost center and in sealed enveloped deposited into a marked receptacle. There was some discussion on how to implement the donations across the department and Friends. Mr. McDonald will include Ms. Schaller on the policy and she will circulate to the Board members prior to the March or April meeting. Mr. McDonald and Ms. Schaller will work with the staff and Board to implement, it. This policy change requires a clear and specific paper trail.

**Mr. Timothy Muir McDonald Formal Presentation of the Needham Housing Authority
Community Health Needs Assessment An Assessment of Needham Housing Authority
Residents: Assets and Opportunities January 2020**

Mr. McDonald noted that report took three years to complete and 40% of residents were reached by various means producing valid qualitative and quantitative data. Surveys were conducted via mail, in focus groups and via interviews. The report was designed to recognize resources, assess those resources and in the future request more resources and/or to reallocate existing resources as needed. Mr. McDonald encouraged Board members to provide feedback once they had read the entire report.

The major findings/needs were broken into six categories Built Environment, Community Building, Food Access, Mental Health, Substance Use, and Transportation

Mr. McDonald noted that part of the challenge is publicizing existing programs that will assist with Needham Housing Authority resident concerns. For example, under Food Access, there are a number of residents who are not aware of the Traveling Meals program, but are more aware of the Community Farm selling at the Housing Authority. 37% don't know about Springwell meals at the CATH. Another example transportation—medical ride program from the Needham Community Council is long standing but only one half of the residents know about it and the other half of respondents have requested medical appointment rides. Mr. McDonald mentioned this is why the Division of Health and Human Services as a whole are bringing

resources to the Housing authority residents—for example Public Health has restarted weekly smoking cessation programs.

Needham Housing Authority had mismanagement issues earlier in the decade when the Wellesley and Needham Authorities were split and its own Board has not yet met to discuss the report's findings and recommendations. The long term maintenance issues are also compounded by long time cuts in federal funding dating back decades there were originally designated to maintain the housing stock. Consequently there is a large backlog of long term maintenance issues. Also because of the mismanagement and the replacement of the Board rent increases were not enforced for several years so now residents are facing eviction notices because the rent increases are substantial reflecting several years without an increase. Many residents are elderly and have difficulty walking and climbing stairs and the properties do not have elevators. The sudden rent increases have exacerbated residents relationship with the Authority staff.

As far as community building is concerned many residents are proud to live in Needham where there are more resources available.

Transportation is an issue, the housing is an areas of town that require a car and many residents have asked for a free shuttle without knowing some of the transportation options already in place in Needham. The Housing Authority staff would like a van earmarked in the state budget through Representative Garlick; it might instead be earmarked for the Council on Aging with 2/3's devoted Housing Authority use and 1/3 for CATH. Either way because of the deferred maintenance backlog they do not have the funds to operate their own stand-alone van service. Health and Human Services will continue to work on publicizing all the existing programs across the Division to Housing Authority residents.

- Mr. McDonald circulated the annual report for Health and Human Services. This is a shorter and more direct version of past years' reports.
- Mr. McDonald noted there is a continuing property discussion for Avery. A developer has approached the planning board with a few more details. This includes a memory care unit and some independent living but not a nursing home. There is discussion of adding below ground parking and some garden level apartments with patios.
- **A copy of the Transportation draft policy was circulated to the Board members. Mr. Goldberg made a motion to make all rides from a senior's home to and from the senior center noted as free of charge in the policy and to empower Mr. McDonald and/or his staff to make any minor clerical edits as needed. Dr. Cosgrove seconded the motion. The vote was in favor with 1 abstention.** The transportation policy is approved with this note to the fee section and any required clerical edits. A final version will be circulated at the March meeting.
- The Board accepted Mr. McDonald's suggestion that the policies and fees should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Friends of the CATH Spring Fling/ Fundraiser March 28th 4:30-7:00 pm Update

Ms. Schaller passed a note to Ms. Grossman—donations and auction items are going well, food is all set, and volunteers to assist at the event are still needed. A Save the Date will be sent end of February. Flyers are at the CATH front desk and will be advertised in the March/April *Compass*. Ms. Schaller

noted that the Board needs to vote to allow the Friends to use the CATH rent free. **Mr. Crossen made a motion to endorse the Friends of the CATH use of the building for their spring fling fundraiser on March 28 without any building rental fee. Mr. Goldberg seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. Board agreed to charge the Friends nothing for use of the facility.** Ms. Grossman asked if the Friends had obtained a Needham liquor license for the event. Ms. Schaller confirmed the liquor license.

Mr. McDonald also noted that Representative Garlick has ear marked \$100,000 in a space utilization grant for the CATH that will fund accessibility and safety assessments within the building. It should also cover interior door work and adding bathroom push button access. Mr. McDonald noted that the initial 2019 estimate for converting the café door to a handicapped access was far too low. He noted that a long term plan for access will need to be drafted and added to a future budget cycle as a second result of this study.

Ms. Moss noted that she would be requesting a Board vote on applying for an AARP Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly Community Designation. There are eight domains of livability that needs to be addressed in the grant application. If the Board approves then Ms. Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, would need to write a letter in support of the grant application. A task force would then be formed if granted. There is no cost for the grant application and if granted it highlight would work that all the divisions in Health and Human Services are already doing. Both Mr. Crossen and Mr. Goldberg noted that not everyone agrees with AARP's tactics or political agenda and in general questioned what Needham would receive if the designation is granted. Ms. Moss circulated the web address so the Board could look at the program in more detail. She noted that among other things the designation would allow restaurants and businesses to note their establishment with a purple sticker. This means staff are trained to be dementia aware so that for example a family could obtain a quiet table automatically with a restaurant reservation. Dr. Cosgrove recommended having the business training at the CATH if the grant is received.

Ms. Goldman made a motion to adjourn at 6:05. Dr. Cosgrove seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. Board adjourned at 6:05 pm

A reminder that the remaining meeting dates 2020 are March 12, April 9, May 14, and June 11.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted, Faith Crisley, Recording Secretary